VacaValley Radio Club
Field Day, June 24-25

Field Day Coordinater-Bob Hawkins, KM6BXZ

19 cw contacts--101 phone contacts--45 ARRL sections--30 states and provinces--3 countries--2 continents

800 bonus points--278 contact points--1078 total points

Vaca Valley Radio Club celebrates Field Day

Vacaville Reporter; Sat 6/24’2017-Sun-6/25-2017

Vaca Valley Radio Club members Ron Koci, Art Miller and Jerry Bowen (left to right) assemble their YAGI, or beam antenna, shortly before going live on ham radio Saturday morning at the Nut Tree Airport. Michael Morris - The Reporter

Vaca Valley Radio Club member Bob Hawkins showcases his ham radio ability outside his RV for the annual field day event Saturday morning at the Nut Tree Airport. Michael Morris - The Reporter

In the event of a national disaster when cell phone towers, phone lines and the internet are down-and-out, Vaca Valley Radio Club will be ready with their ham radio in tow.

But there is one weekend a year in which radio clubs and audio wave enthusiasts conduct operations to demonstrate ham radio's science, skill and service to the public. During the final weekend of June every year, the ham radio community across the nation holds Field Day and more than 40,000 ham radios are expected to commemorate the tradition.

"In ham radio, it's the big event every year," said Vaca Valley Radio Club President Frank Garay. "They put on a lot of different events and contests throughout the year that people can participate in. But Field Day is the big one. People across the entire country are testing their preparedness and we're going to pretend like it's the zombie apocalypse. We need to make sure we can keep communication for the rest of the world."

The annual event first took place in 1933 but Vaca Valley Radio Club has set up shop at the Nut

Tree Airport each of the last two years.

After a less than ideal transmission yesteryear, 12-plus members of the local club showed up in the wee hours of Saturday morning to erect a pair of unique and far-reaching antennas in lieu of the 11 a.m. broadcast that will run until Sunday morning.

However, the lack of sun spot activity has been a troublesome hurdle to overcome in recent years as it inhibits the propagation of radio waves in the ionosphere. But with the 15- to 20-foot tall center masts positioned in the open field adjacent to the Nut Tree Aiport parking lot, and in between the nearby aviation hangars, members of the Vaca Valley Radio Club brought 7,000 kilowatts worth of generators, three 12-volt batteries and two solar panels this go around.

"What makes radio waves work better is lots of sun spot activity; which cycles about every 10 years," Garay explained. "Technically, we're in kind of a lull right now but we seem to be coming out of it. When there are more sun spots, it makes the ionosphere more refractive or reflective so the radio waves bounce off of it and you can get a lot better communications going on. It's going to be better then it was last year."

Although Garay makes it sound simple, there is a lot that goes into preparing for the two-day event. Field day planning begins in April as members discuss the anticipated conditions, what they should bring and the anticipated adjustments made before they go live.

But the opportunities are seemingly boundless in regard to who and where you will link up with another ham radio broadcaster. In recent years, Texas, Santa Barbara and British Columbia highlighted a small portion of the results.

Vaca Valley Radio Club member Don Preston also reached out to people across the country in

"CW", or Morse code; the transmitting of text information in a series of on-off tones or clicks.

Despite the ever-changing digital world individuals have grown accustomed to, the local radio club has blossomed in the last two years; going from just over 20 members to a current crop of 43 total members.

"Decades ago, radio was something taught in schools in science classes, so it was a lot more popular back in the old days," Garay said. "But there is still a thriving community of people who still enjoy doing it all over the country."

How to set up a 38 foot Tower and Beam in 7 easy steps compliments of Art, KI6UXE

Step one-Anchor Art's custom made base

Step two-Place guy wires and Attach the tower

Step-three-Raise the tower a few feet

Step four-Make sure all is ready for the Beam

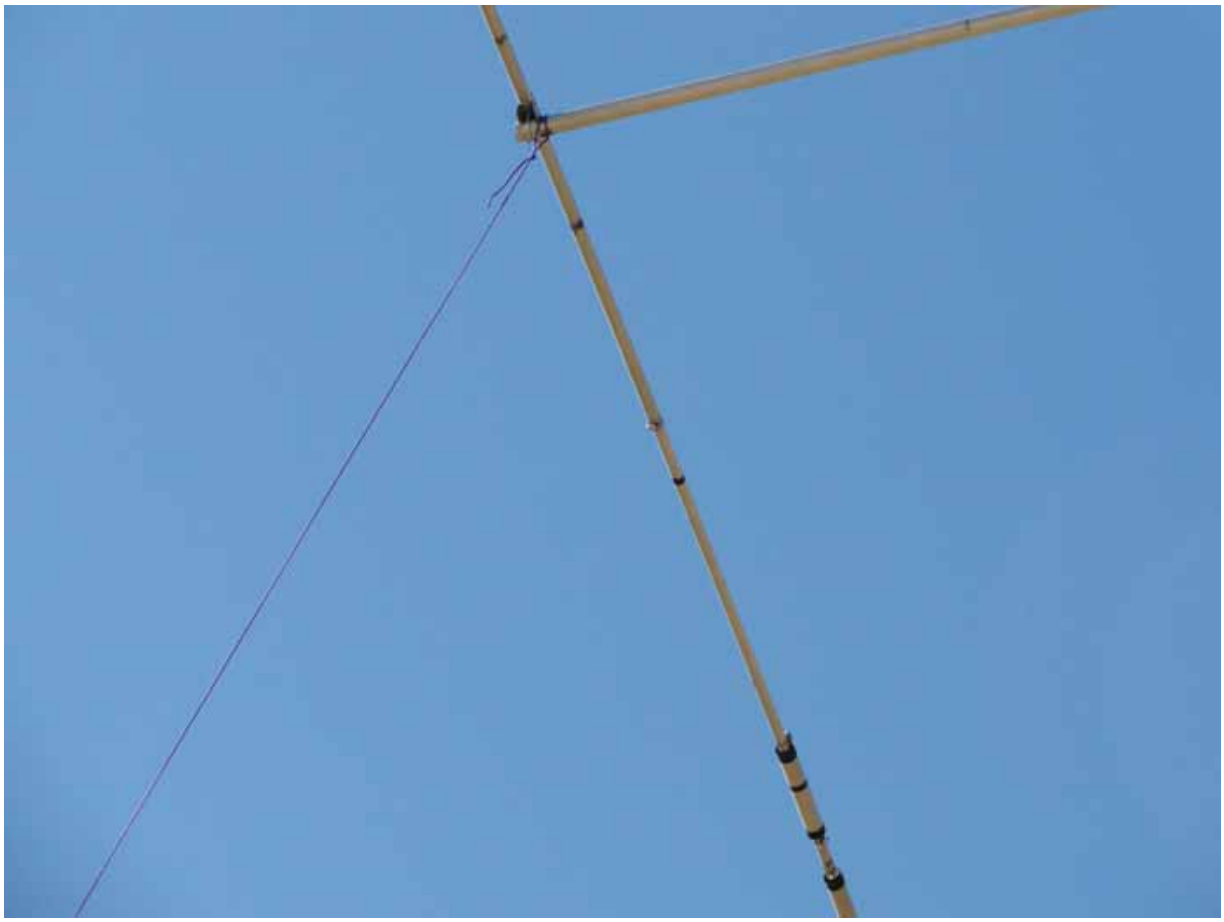
Step five- Assemble the Beam-

Step 6-Attach the beam to the tower

Step 7-Raise the beam fully
Attach the rotor cable and antenna coax to the contol box and radio

“It looks great Art!

An overall view of the antenna farm ready to get on the air



OOOps, Rotator Failed- Line attached to front of beam and rotated by human power (Art)

Art, KI6UXE's Station

Art's Tally Sheet

Brian, KK6BXP's Antenna

Brian,KK6BXP's Station

Bob Hawkins, KM6BXZ's Station

The All Important Chef At Work

The Sunday Morning gathering was enhanced with perfect cool weather